

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

NEWSLETTER
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FROM MARCELLA, TOM & LIZ

UPDATE



Our luncheon on October 10 was a great opportunity to reconnect and reflect. As I said at the time, the process we're using to move forward together is a new - and in some ways radical - way of doing things for most of us. We are all used to creating task forces and committees that issue reports and recommendations. Some of those recommendations are implemented; typically, many are not.

Larry Roper has offered us a new way of doing things. It breaks so radically from our usual way of operating that I have had a time getting my head around it. I think I have it now. The key, for me, is understanding that phrase "the right people are in the room." Last summer, when we gathered at the Marriott, the right people were in the room. That's not to say that other people might not have made a contribution. It *does* mean that the people in the room were able to make a difference by themselves. We (you) didn't need an "executive sponsor," someone to provide resources, or someone to give permission. The right people were in the room.

How can that be? The key is to decide, together, to find important things to do that are within the capacity of the people in the room. Given our commitment to each other, if we pick projects that we can do with the people in the room, they will get done. If we pick projects that make work for others, they may or may not get done. The projects that the people in the room can get done may not be the projects of which we dream. The people in the room can't change the campus culture. But the people in the room *can* identify a retention project that will begin to change the campus culture.

I know that the working groups cannot do everything that needs to be done. No one can. That makes it all the more important that we do what we can.

Do what you can, with what you
have, where you are.

Theodore Roosevelt

What **broad vision** do you have for what students of color will experience at the University of Iowa

VISION



R_efining Our Vision:

The University of Iowa will promote an environment and atmosphere that is safe, engaging and inclusive for all students, faculty and staff of color. In keeping with the Hawkeye Spirit, the educational experience will be nurturing, challenging and transformative.

What **key concepts** (beliefs) must we embrace [to achieve our vision]?

WE BELIEVE

R_efining Our Beliefs:

1. We believe that we can create an environment where students of color can thrive and succeed.
2. We believe every student can and will succeed.
3. We believe a culture of change is essential, and in order to succeed we must work together.
4. We believe diversity is essential and excellence requires diversity.
5. We believe that the future of the university depends on building a critical mass of students, faculty, and staff of color.
6. We believe that ongoing cultural competency is important for everyone and acknowledge that each of us is in a different place in our growth and understanding.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

WORK GROUP COMMITTEE



The Cultural Competence Work Group has continued working on the development of a webpage intended to centralize resources related to cultural competence at the University of Iowa. The group is preparing a document that includes a definition of cultural competence, assumptions and sections for general information, self-awareness, awareness of others and skill development resources. The website will include a statement that indicates where this website fits within the context of other diversity website resources on campus such as Center for Diversity and

Enrichment, Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

Our next step is to contact Doty Simpson-Taylor to ask her to add information to the various sections of the website proposal and to discuss with her a strategy for gathering that information from other units across the UI campus.

Currently, we are consulting with a graphic designer to create a logo for the website. In the spring, the work group will reconvene to continue the development of the website which will include consulting with web/logo designers and technical staff.

The work group believes we have completed our charge when: (1) the website is up and linked to the homepage and (2) a steering committee has been selected for on-going review of resource items to be posted on the website.

RECRUITMENT

WORK GROUP COMMITTEE

Discussions revolved around what the actual charge of the group should be, whether this committee was actually needed given all of the other task forces and committees that have met in the recent past on diversity recruitment and retention, and everyone in the room helped each other better understand what is already taking place on campus to recruit students of color.

In order to assist the group to better understand what direction to take, we will be reviewing the report generated in March 2007 by the Task Force on Undergraduate Enrollment and Retention for Diversity. We have also invited Marcella David to join us at our next meeting to give a clearer picture surrounding diversity recruitment efforts, past and present. This should help us define the group's charge and set goals.

A

t our first meeting, we reviewed the following UI documents:

- First-year retention data for first-year students from under-represented groups and other students and 4- and 6-year graduation rates, both of which demonstrate clear disparities between the groups.
- Data from exit questionnaires for non-returning students, which indicated students from under-represented groups were more likely than other students to note a sense of not belonging. We discussed the need to probe further about that information: do students feel uneasy in the classroom, in the UI community, or in Iowa City/Coralville? We also talked about the possibility of drafting additional questions for the exit surveys.

We also discussed the possibility of creating some sort of support peer group, such as “big brother/big sister,” with the Department of Internal Medicine/Carver College of Medicine. Medical students and trainees might volunteer to support first-year students from underrepresented groups (e.g., informal social interactions). Other colleges might wish to create something similar that could be coordinated through the UI EOD office.

“Moving Forward Together” End-of-Semester Celebration

The “Moving Forward Together” (MFT) group met on Friday, December 12 to celebrate the end of the semester and our collective efforts since the July retreat. Individual members shared news from their lives and work, and each of the work groups – Cultural Competence, Recruitment, and Retention – offered updates on their progress (highlights are provided elsewhere in this newsletter).

We also had a very useful discussion about “next steps” for the MFT group. We talked about the possibilities for bringing new members into the group and what sorts of activities would be appropriate to our purposes in the spring semester. We agreed, in general, that another summer retreat would be useful and a good time to bring in new members. In addition, we talked about bringing “experts” to our spring meetings to inform our efforts. Suggestions for such experts included Roger Maxwell, Michael Hovland (pre-enrollment information), Joan Vandenberg, and Diana Gonzalez (from the Board of Regents). The result of this discussion was the decision to create an MFT Program Committee to develop specific agendas and programs for the spring semester and for our 2009 summer retreat. Volunteers to serve on this committee were: David Braun, Wayne Fett, Val Garr, Gabriela Rivera, Jane Warner, Sherry Watt, and Don Yarbrough. Liz Whitt will convene the group (Note: the group’s first meeting is January 20, 2009).

We also talked about professional development opportunities that might inform our collective work and contribute to individual development. The Black Student Achievement conference at Clemson University (Nancy Humbles, John Laverty, and Johnnie Sims will represent us) is one such example. Others include webinars, workshops, and conferences. If you are aware of professional development opportunities that would be of benefit to MFT members, please let Liz know (elizabeth-whitt@uiowa.edu).

Thanks to everyone for making this a productive and rewarding meeting and semester. And thanks to Heather Moore for refreshments (the New Pi cookies were a big hit!).

An important step was agreeing to **continue the dialogue.**

MORE TO BE DONE



Our retreat last summer was remarkable in ways that were clear to me at the time, and also in ways that I didn't recognize right away. Larry Roper invited us to work in a new way; in fact in a radically new way, and I didn't recognize that until sometime after the retreat.

On our campus, as on most, task forces, committees, working groups and other such animals are a way of life. Normally, these groups meet, study an issue, and issue a report with recommendations. The administrator sponsoring the group takes the recommendations and implements them—or not. Unfortunately, it is relatively common for the work of the committee to be done in relative isolation, so that the recommendations may not fit the realities of budget, politics, or related programs or policies. When that happens, the recommendations can sometimes languish, to the legitimate frustration of the members of the committee, and usually of the administrator as well.

One of Larry's strongest messages to us was that "the right people are in the room." I got this at one level. The fact that people made the commitment to be at the retreat was evidence enough that they were the right people. Further, there was no point in worrying about who wasn't there.

What Larry was saying was deeper than that, though, and has taken me longer to get my head around. Larry was encouraging us to take on tasks that the people in the room could do without permission or support from anyone. Rather than asking (or telling) others to do something, we can identify things that we can do and do them. It's not that others shouldn't be doing things, and it's not that some of the things that need to happen are beyond our control. Rather, I take Larry's point to be that we should spend our energy where we know it will do some good, namely on things where we are in control.

I think that's good guidance for the Moving Forward Together effort, and actually a bit of profound advice for life.

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